



CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

She said it with such heartfelt longing that, after a struggle with his better self, he burst out laughing. He laughed long and heartily, in spite of his desire to suppress himself, while Marvel sat staring at him.

All at once her courage forsook her, and finally she took leave of him as if he were going to New Zealand.

"It will be a terrible thing," she said, "that I will try not to mind it much."

"And if I should not return the day after tomorrow," he ventured, in a rather nervous tone, feeling that he was growing quite afraid of her—"there is a bare possibility—that is, perhaps I may be detained."

He paused, wondering how she would take this, and was at last quite surprised by her manner—it was different from what he had expected.

"You won't," she said, confidently. "You said 'perhaps' to it, and that always means doubt; and I know things could not happen so unkindly as to keep you away longer than the day after tomorrow."

"What shall I bring you from town?" he asked, laughing. "A doll?"

"Nonsense! Don't you see that I'm grown up? Now go—go quickly!"—giving him a little push. "The sooner you go the sooner you will come back to me."

The horse standing outside the open gates, she could see, was growing restive. Wriothersley jumped into the dog cart and gathered up the reins, while Marvel turned away discreetly and went slowly toward the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Scarlett was alone; she was very simply but very expensively and expensively dressed, and she was calm and smilingly self-composed as though love's tumults were unknown to her. She rose as Wriothersley entered, and greeted him with precisely the proper amount of gravity due to a young man who had recently lost his mother—Mrs. Mary, she knew, had been quite that to him.

"I was wondering when you would come," she said.

He looked at her quickly. When he would come! How strange her tone was! Had she forgotten?

"Did you get my note?" she went on, "Oh, I am sure you got it. You must have thought me so cold, so unfeeling; but nowadays don't you think the postal arrangements are very defective? I wish you had had that note; but even without it, dear Wriothersley, you know you had my sincerest sympathy all through."

"Did you think I ought to have come?" he asked, clinging in a dull way to her first sentence. Perhaps he had offended her by obeying her too closely and keeping away until the day named. He hoped so with a passion of which he himself was hardly aware. He had heard nothing more that she had said—only those first words.

"O, no; in the circumstances I could not have expected or desired that you should call! I hope I am too much your friend not to know when to efface myself." She smiled, and he felt a brilliant, fleeting smile. Indeed, I did not dare to think I should have the pleasure of seeing you again for quite a long time to come. But you have been very good to me. Do you know—leaning toward him—"the very last thing I expected was to see you to-day?"

What did it all mean? Why did she speak to him like that? His friend! How strange it all was! He felt dazed, confused, and a surging sound came into his ears and tormented him. The very last thing she had expected! Then the singing sound died away, and he found himself quite calm and cold. She was still talking, her soft, plaintive voice was subtly sweet as ever.

"Though personally unknown to me, I feel from all I have heard that Lady Mary Craven was a friend not to be replaced."

"You are right," he said, gravely. "Lady Mary was an angelically perfect nature."

"All her acquaintances say that. And the little girl, the protégée—what of her?"

"That is a matter that has been troubling me," he said. "She is such a child that it is impossible to make her understand certain things. Yet of course she cannot go on living at the Towers in the old way. I hardly know what to do with her."

"Why, marry her, of course!" said Mrs. Scarlett, laughing. "That is the best and readiest way to solve such a problem as that."

"You are joking," he said, very slowly. "Indeed I am not. Why should you think so? If all that we outsiders hear is true, she is a very vision of loveliness, is she not? Why, how conscious you look! I do believe that that marriage scheme has already suggested itself to you."

"Your usual clear-sightedness is at fault there," said Wriothersley, with a faultless smile. "The only way out of the difficulty that has suggested itself to me has been my marriage with yourself."

to feel regret for the victim when the moment comes to cast him aside?"

"Who is it?" he demanded, abruptly. Her insolent scorn had not touched him; he thought only of an answer to this question that should tell him all.

She regarded him steadily for a moment.

"I think there had better be an end of this," she said.

"No there shall be, when I know who has taken my place."

"Your place? What place? What is it you mean?"

"I mean to know before I leave this house the name of the man you intend to marry," retorted he, doggedly.

His tone angered her even more than his persistence.

"Know it then," she cried, glaring at him defiantly—"it is the Duke of Dawtry."

Wriothersley started, a death-like pallor overspread his face, and such a strange light came into his eyes that for the moment she was frightened; then it all passed away, and suddenly he was upon his knees before her, clasping her gown.

"My darling, not that," he cried, wildly—"not that old man! Oh, the shame, the horror of it! Leonie, listen to me—be patient. Hear me before it is too late. I have such love as I can offer—my whole heart and life—as nothing to you when compared with—"

"You think a good deal of that love of yours," she said, mockingly—"certainly more than I do."

Her words sobered him. He rose to his feet, still looking very pale, but quite composed.

"Are you going?" she asked. "It is a pity our friendship should end like this, but it is your own fault. As I told you—shrugging her shoulders—"you are not reasonable. You believed—I don't know—"

"I believed myself your lover," replied he, steadily—"I believed that I was regarded as such by you."

"If you did, you have only yourself to blame." Again her eyes gleamed angrily at him. How dared he stand there and coldly condemn her? "And there is still one thing left for me to do."

She swept out of the room into the corridor beyond, and presently returning, flung upon a table before him a mass of glittering gems—rings, bracelets, necklaces and such like baubles.

"Will you take them with you, or shall I send them?" she asked.

It was all so horrible, so unexpected, that for a few moments Wriothersley stood there motionless, as if stunned, and unable to realize what had happened. Then almost mechanically he took up his hat, bowed to her, and left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

All day long Wriothersley walked the streets, almost unconsciously, and in the afternoon found himself in the very heart of the city, when suddenly a craving for the sweet, cool country came upon him.

He stepped into a hansom, then into a train; and as the light began to fade he reached the Towers.

As he went through one of the openings in the yew wall, he caught a glimpse of a slender and shadowy figure standing upon the balcony outside the library windows.

The tall, childish form in its somber dinner gown of black crepe he recognized as Mrs. Craven's. He had seen her, remembered that he had altogether forgotten her. There was something disconcerting in her attitude as she leaned against a marble pillar and looked out over the sea; but all traces of sorrow left her as she glanced to turn her head and her eyes fell upon Wriothersley.

A low cry broke from her lips—a cry of triumph and happy joy. In less than a minute she had run down the steps, had rushed across the path, and placed one hand on each of his arms.

"Didn't I say so?" she cried. "Didn't I know it? I felt that that horrid business would be kind and let you come back to me sooner than you imagined. Oh, how glad I am to have you here again. Aren't you glad to be home again?"

"Yes—very," he said, and smiled at her.

"What has given you that strange look in your eyes?" she asked, with all a child's directness. "Did you learn to look like that up there in London?"

"I suppose so; though I don't exactly know how I look."

"Some one has been unkind to you," she said, kindly, speaking very softly.

"Some one has broken my heart," he replied, slowly.

"Ah!" She pondered this for awhile, and then said, "Was that why you came home so soon?"

"Yes."

"It was a bad business then?"

He smiled at that involuntarily. "Very bad—hopeless."

"And who was your enemy? A man or a woman?"

"I could not call her an enemy," said he, absently—"hardly that, in any fairness. She had every right to choose as she did."

"It was a woman, then?"—triumphantly. "I knew it. Look—I will tell you something," said she, confidentially. "I don't like women so well as men. They are less honest, I think. Ah, wait until I am old enough to go there and find her, and charge her with her cruelty to you, and then we shall see."

"Thank you, my little champion," said Wriothersley, with a faint smile. "If you look like that when you lend the attack, all must go down before you." Then he sighed wearily, and turned away from her, and went moodily down the garden path with his arms behind him, as though she had never been.

The next day Wriothersley read in a society paper the announcement that a marriage had been arranged to take place between the Duke of Dawtry and Mrs. Scarlett. When he thus read the confirmation of his dream his first impulse was to leave England again and go abroad. But when he told Marvel of this the young girl burst into bitter tears and charged him with being untrue to his promise to Aunt Mary.

"My dear child," he said, "people often make rash promises that are not kept. When I said that I would be a guardian

to you, I quite believed my home would be for the future in England. But Fate—chances—circumstances—what you will, has ordained it otherwise. I would keep my promise, if I could; but—how can I?"

"You can't," she cried, springing to her feet. "Don't you see how you can't? Take me with you!"

"Look here, Marvel," said he, with some asperity—"you are very young, I know, but that is no reason why you should be a—er—so utterly absurd. It is time you should learn that a girl of your age could not roam about the world with a young man unless he were to marry her."

"Well, why don't you marry me then?" she said, resentful tears filling her eyes.

She stared at her for some moments in unfeigned amazement, hardly knowing what to say to her. She could not think of the meaning of her words struck him. If he were to marry her! The events of the past few weeks recurred to him, and swiftly in imagination he passed again through the scenes that he would have been only too glad to forget. First he saw the pale, beautiful face of Lady Mary calmly and serenely awaiting the approach of death. Again he heard her entreating him in gentle accents to befriend the lonely child she had loved and reared, while her face was upturned to him with a look of ineffable love in her pleading eyes. And then Marvel could not but think of her face, with an expression of childish mockery, and the beautiful eyes, as the lips he had once kissed proclaimed to him that solution of the problem which so perplexed him. Marvel—such was the advice given to him, he thought only of saving their and then suddenly the thought of her decision; she was sitting on a low seat, her head drooping, her fingers interlaced, with an expression of deepest melancholy upon her childish face. He went over to her, and, leaning upon the back of a chair, said, deliberately:

"You think if I were to—that is, if you were to marry me it would arrange matters, and make you happier? So be it, then."

She drew her breath quickly, but said nothing.

"Will you?" he said.

"Would it?"—raising her large anxious eyes to his—"would it mean that you would take me with you when you go abroad forever?"

"Certainly. That is what it would mean"—no more, he thought.

"Then I will," she said, solemnly.

She looked at him earnestly, and as she looked the grave expression on her face died away, and a smile began to part her trembling lips. A moment later the last remnant of her grief and fear had vanished as a snowflake melts before the embrace of the sun.

"Is it true? Is it real?" she cried. "Shall I indeed go with you?"

"Do you think you can be ready in a hurry?" asked he, filled now with his own desire to quit England and the woman who had deceived him. "At once, I mean—in a real hurry? Could you, with some hesitation, feeling uncertain as to how she would take it—could you marry me, say, to-morrow?"

"This minute, if you like," she said, heartily. "What is there to prevent it?"

The next few days passed in a hurried whirl of preparation for the hasty marriage. Then came the wedding morning. Marvel rose early and went for a solitary stroll through the gardens and those parts of the grounds that had grown specially dear through fond associations. The clear ringing of a bell within the house warned her that time was flying, so, with many a farewell glance and sigh, and not without a few tears, she returned to her room.

Her mind was full of Lady Mary on this her marriage day. In some strange occult way she seemed to be very near to her. When her toilet was quite completed, she dismissed her maid and knelt down before a tall ornate chair and prayed fervently for a little while—that Fuke might be happy always, and she, too, and good, and that he might always love her.

In the vestry room she signed her name, "Marvel Craven," in her firm, beautiful handwriting, and afterward she kissed the rector and then her husband.

They were standing in the library, almost ready to start, when Wriothersley noticed the locket that Marvel wore round her neck. It was the same old battered ornament she had on her on the night she had been rescued by him from the storm.

"How many years is it since I saw that," he said, touching it; "and what a mite you were then! You remember?"

"I remember that you saved me. Auntie told me always to keep this locket, as it might help me to find—to trace some one belonging to me. You know I have neither father, brother, nor sister," she said, simply. "I have indeed no one—no one—in a low tone—but you?"

He felt as though he were in a dream, standing there with the girl—little more than a child—beside him, who in reality was his wife. For a moment he was almost overcome by a horrible longing to undo it all—to escape from her—to be free once more; but it was too late! He drew a deep breath, and compelled himself to return to the listless, indifferent tone and manner which he had adopted ever since he had arranged his marriage. He despised himself for entertaining such thoughts. He doubly despised himself for the thought that had entered his mind at the sound of her last words—that he had indeed given the good old name to a woman who was herself nameless!

Marvel went on board the yacht still clad in the white gown. She had elected to wear it all through the day, and then put it away and kept it ever sacred as her wedding gown. So much she thought about her marriage, but little more. The real thing was that she was going to sail away with Fuke to summer seas and sunny lands.

(To be continued.)

Squaw's Affection.
The women of the Indians, doomed by the custom of savages, are slaves. They do all the work, and accept their lot stoically. Two anecdotes, related by Colonel Inman, in his "Old Santa Fe Trail," prove that they love their tyrant husbands and their children.

A party of United States soldiers surprised a camp of Indians, who had been murdering the whites in Washington Territory. Six prisoners were captured. They were allowed to take leave of their families, and then shot.

The parting between the condemned men and their young wives and children," says Colonel Inman, "was the most perfect exhibition of marital and filial love I have ever seen."

During the campaign of 1880, Colonel Inman, while riding with the regulars, came upon a Cheyenne lodge. Within, on a rough platform, was a dead warrior in full war-dress. At his head, on her knees, with hands clasped in the attitude of prayer, was a squaw frozen to death. She thus showed her love for the man who had perhaps beaten her a hundred times.

The average society leader has reason for being ashamed of her calling.

She Gave Herself Away.
The woman mentioned in this little story may be called Mrs. Haughty, but she is known in almost every community by other names. She is inclined to do all she can to make other people believe she is somebody, and that she is fitted for a higher sphere than the one she is forced by adverse circumstances to live in.

A short time ago Mrs. Haughty called on a neighbor and accepted an invitation to stay to supper. Much and milk was the principal supper dish, and Mrs. Haughty declared with sundry exclamations that she had never eaten that delightful compound. The steaming platter of mush was set in the center of the table, and a bowl of milk placed in front of Mrs. Haughty.

"Just help yourself, Mrs. Haughty," remarked the hostess.

"Really, I do not know how to begin," said Mrs. Haughty, as she picked up her spoon.

Mrs. Haughty made a move, and one of the children leaned over to her mother and whispered:

"She said she never ate mush and milk, but she dipped her spoon in the milk before she dipped it into the mush."

That little movement saved Mrs. Haughty away, for every lover of mush and milk knows that if the spoon is first dipped into the milk the mush will not stick to it.

Why He Reformed.
Hal—Is it true that you are opposed to all games of chance?

Ned—Yes I am now.

Hal—How long have you opposed them?

Ned—Ever since I got married.

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